

# Gang-gang

May 2005

News letter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

## Monthly Meeting

8 pm Wednesday

11 May 2005

*Canberra Girls Grammar School  
cnr Gawler Cres and Melbourne  
Ave, Deakin. The meetings are  
held in the Multi-media Theatre at  
the School. Enter off Gawler  
Crescent using the school road  
signposted as Gabriel Drive. If  
that carpark is full, enter using  
Chapel Drive.*

Jack Holland, who needs no introduction, will give the **short talk** entitled "**Red-breasted Robins Reprised**". He will concentrate on non-coloured birds though the handsome males will also get a guernsey.

Our **main talk** will be "2003-04 in review" and will feature a selection of the authors of the **Annual Bird Report** speaking on the birding highlights and lowlights of the year just passed. Come and see how your 2003-04 compared with what is reflected in COG's databases!

A selection of **Geoff Dabb** video clips on the same theme will be sure to entertain.

**Everyone welcome**

## Field Trip and Survey Reports

### Newline Site Woodland Survey 27 March 2005

I did the autumn survey on Easter Sunday, a cool still morning (and a nice break from painting after house renovations). The front paddock, as usual, had the best diversity of woodland birds, with 3 **Brown Treecreepers** at one site, 4 **Crested Shrike-tits**, (two adults feeding two young), at the other site there, a flock of 5 **Varied Sittellas**, a pair of **Jacky Winter** and a male **Speckled Warbler**. Other interesting sightings were a **Peaceful Dove** near the dump site, groups of **Double-barred Finches** (16 in total), **Dusky Woodswallow**, one **Southern Whiteface**, and several large groups of **Silvereyes** and **Striated Pardalotes** moving through. Most of the migrants seem to have gone, with the exception of the **Woodswallows**, a couple of **Rufous Whistlers** and **Grey Fantails** and one **Western Gerygone**. Total 39 species for the survey.

Just north of Newline is the Majura Field Firing Range where COG also has woodland survey sites. Interestingly, I recorded 3 **Brown Treecreepers** at one of the COG sites there a couple of weeks ago during our autumn survey (in Yellow Box/Red Box woodland - similar to Newline). This is the first sighting we have had of Brown Treecreepers at any of the Majura Range woodland sites, although I'm aware that there has been the odd record of this species at the Range. One wonders if the recent breeding season has been a good one for Brown Treecreepers, have they spread out from areas like Newline (there have been a record number reported in the Newline paddock, possibly up to 7 this season). There have also been reports of the species at a new reserve in the Jerrabomberra Valley. Steve Holliday reports that the lone Brown Treecreeper is still at our southern Gooroo Nature Reserve woodland site, and still only the one bird confirmed there.

*Jenny Bounds*

### Angle Crossing Honeyeater Migration Sunday 10 April 2005

In previous years the honeyeater migration outing has been held near Angle Crossing where the honeyeaters could be counted as they funnelled down a narrow strip of native vegetation after passing



## Follow That Bird

Our small well serviced birdwatching tours with the following trips having pick up and drop offs available from Canberra's city centre.

All three star accommodation and meals are included. For an itinerary for any of the trips please contact us.

### May 2005

Gluepot, Mungo and Wyperfeld 2-8th  
(excludes airfare) \$ 2130  
Start Canberra End Adelaide  
Leader Alan Morris

### June 2005

Blue Green and Gold of Coffs Harbour  
28- 3rd July \$ 1425  
Especially for Canberrans, Start & end  
Canberra. Leader Alan Morris

### October 2005

Eastern Australia  
Part 1 Tropical Cairns 1st-6th \$ 2250  
Leader Klaus Uhlenhut Start & End Cairns  
Part 2 Lamington to Sydney \$ 3950  
Leader Alan Morris  
Start Lamington End Sydney

### December 2005

Christmas Island \$ 2850  
Leader Dion Hobcroft Start & End Perth

### January 2006

Alpine Birds, Plants & Everything \$ 1485  
Leader Dion Hobcroft

### February 2006

Divine Lord Howe Island 18-22th \$ 1750  
(excludes airfare) Start Lord Howe  
End Lord Howe. Leader the Lord  
of Howe himself : Ian Hutton

Visit our website or telephone for  
more information

## Follow That Bird

Birds and Camaraderie

3/59 Central Rd, Avalon 2107

Tel 02 9973 1865 Fax 02 9973 1875

email [tours@followthatbird.com.au](mailto:tours@followthatbird.com.au)

website [followthatbird.com.au](http://followthatbird.com.au)

through the Ingledene pine plantation. However, during the past year the pines have been felled windrowed and burnt leaving a barren landscape dotted with log piles and the odd native tree.

During a brief recce a few days before the outing this year, few honeyeaters were passing through the former viewing location, but many hundreds were following a different route through native vegetation along the northern edge of the former plantation. This was chosen as the new location for the outing.

Sunday 10 April was a glorious day for bird watching but just a bit too summery to be a good honeyeater migration day. A bit too warm, too humid and a bit breezy. They were still coming past but not with the same purpose and confidence as a few days earlier. During the outing we counted 1200 in 100 mins, whereas during the recce there were 1400 in 20 minutes. The honeyeaters were not very confident about their direction, making several false starts and usually waiting for large numbers to build up before committing to crossing open space. We saw several large groups of 200-300 birds but there were long periods in between when no honeyeater moved. The vast majority were **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters**, with occasional **White-naped Honeyeaters** and a few **White-eared Honeyeaters** and **Eastern Spinebills**.

For the rest of the morning, we retired to the Tharwa Sandwash on the Murrumbidgee River. This is always a good location to spend some time, and we saw 38 species in a little over an hour. We had good views of **Restless Flycatcher**, **Dusky Woodswallow** and **Black-fronted Dotterel**. A **Southern Whiteface** called persistently from the opposite bank but was too distant to be seen clearly, and a **Brown Treecreeper** patrolled the far bank giving only occasional glimpses of itself. Those who went for a short amble along the riverbank found **Red-browed** and **Double-barred Finches**, while a lucky few saw **Diamond Firetails**.

*Nicki Taws*

### Mulligan's Flat NR Woodland Survey 3 April 2005

Nine COG members assisted me with this survey on Sunday 3 April, a warm increasingly overcast morning with wind rising briskly in front of a change in weather. While there were several feeding flocks of small birds around, it was a relatively quiet morning for birds. Highlights were a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** on the eastern side of the reserve, **Brown Falcon** near the reserve entrance at site 9, **Scarlet Robin** at 2 sites, **Golden Whistler** at 3 sites, **Western Gerygone** at 2 sites, **Common Bronzewing** at 2 sites and a flock of 10 **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**. Total 45 species for the morning.

Very few **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** were around (1 and 3 birds at 2 sites only), possibly the weather was a factor influencing movement. The large dam is now quite small in area, only 30 metres by 100 metres, but there were a few ducks and 3 **Black-fronted Dotterel** there. COG has recently written to the ACT Government supporting moves to restore the dam wall on the large dam, which was breached during heavy rain several years back. We are hopeful this will go ahead and should give a boost to the biodiversity in the reserve. Thanks to all who helped with the survey, now in its 11th year.

*Jenny Bounds*

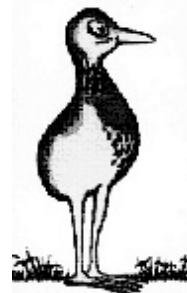
### Anzac Weekend Campout at 'Frog's Hole Creek', Frogmore.

Thirteen members gathered for an exploratory visit to this area, NE of Boorowa, on a 144 hectare private property. This is a magnificent, hilly property with a large number of old eucalypts of several species including Yellow Box, White Box and Apple Box (some of which was in flower) and patches of very old Black Cypress Pine. A large number of plantings have gone in over recent years and quite a lot of re-growth of callitris and other native species is evident since grazing was limited. Although it was extremely dry in the countryside after many weeks without rain, the beautiful autumn weather made up for this.

On our way up via the back roads through Binalong and Galong, a small group of us we were lucky enough to see **Peregrine Falcon, Zebra Finches** and **Brown Songlarks**. Gunnary Threatened Species Reserve just east of Boorowa (where Swift Parrots have been recorded some years) was quiet, however, with nothing flowering.

It was fabulous weather for camping with a mild night on Saturday, a full moon and warm calm days. Our campsite (and the loo with a view) overlooked a creek bed which was lightly misted early on Sunday morning. This was a very relaxing overnight camp, with walks on the property, (some relaxed over Sunday breakfast), and an impressive total of 75 bird species recorded over the Saturday and Sunday - a very good total considering most spring migrants had left. Six new bird species were added to the property list and one mammal, Ring-tailed Possum. Large numbers of **Diamond Firetails** and **Hooded Robins** delighted us with great views, as did a large mixed flock which included **Scarlet Robins, Varied Sittellas** and many thornbills and weebills and small honeyeaters. **Striped Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Superb Parrots** and both **Pied** and **Grey Butcherbirds** were good sightings, and the **Australian Owlet-nightjar** which called close to camp on Sunday morning, was later seen peering out of its roosting hole on the other side of the gully.

The communal, buffet dinner on Saturday night coordinated by



### **Australian Ornithological Services P/L**

PO Box 385  
South Yarra 3141  
Victoria  
Tel: 03 9820 4223  
Mob: 04173 10200

[enquiries@philipmaher.com](mailto:enquiries@philipmaher.com)

## **2005 Birding Tours**

**The Good Food  
Plains-wanderer Weekend  
19 & 20 November 2005**  
Combining good food, good wine  
and good birding

**2005 Plains-wanderer Weekends**  
10 & 11 December 2005  
17 & 18 December 2005  
31 Dec ember 05 & 1 January 06

**2006**  
**5 —11 February 06**  
**Tasmania**  
Bruny Island, Derwent Bridge,  
Melaleuca & pelagic trip. Accom.

**23—30 April 06**  
**Central Australia birding tour**  
Alice Springs, Uluru, Glen Helen  
Accommodated

**15—30 May 06**  
**Top End**  
Darwin, Kakadu NP, Kununurra,  
Mitchell Plateau, Lake Argyle Accom.

**1 — 8 August 06**  
New Caledonia birding tour

**15 August – 2 September 06**  
**Strzelecki Track Outback Tour**  
Accommodated  
check website for availability

**7– 24 April 2007 Thailand**

[www.philipmaher.com](http://www.philipmaher.com)



Jane Green (a feature of many COG camps where everyone brings a contribution) was appreciated by all. I have been asked to particularly mention the marinated strawberries prepared by Alastair Smith, which went so well with Sue Lashko's gourmet cheesecake. Afterwards, a small spotlighting group led by Michael Wright headed up the hills - not an easy feat I found after several glasses of red wine, to stand on a steepish slope looking straight up at the possums!

Some of us ventured further north on Sunday on a circuitous route home and others checked out the antique and craft shops in Frogmore and Boorowa. One group dropped into Hovells Creek Threatened Species Reserve just north of Frogmore



Group relaxing around camp on Frog's Hole Creek.

Photo courtesy Jenny Bounds



and were lucky to see **Blue-faced Honeyeater**, **Striped Honeyeater** and **Crested Shrike-tits**, then after a wrong turn, a raiding party opportunistically gathered a bucket full of quinces from a wild tree by the roadside (see photo left, courtesy Jenny Bounds). The things some people get up to on a birding weekend!! **Apostlebirds** and **Superb Parrots** were seen at another woodland remnant stop.

Thanks to Richard and Angela for allowing COG to visit their property, and to Jack Holland who made most of the arrangements, but had to pull out at the last minute due to a family bereavement.

*Jenny Bounds*

## Future Field Trips

### East Basin/Molonglo River Electric Boat cruise Sunday 8 May

A repeat late autumn cruise on the upper parts of Lake Burley Griffin and the adjacent Molonglo Reach on the all electric "E.L. Cygnet. This season has been a particularly good one for the nesting **Darters** and both **Little Pied** and **Little Black Cormorants**. With most of the leaves off the trees this should allow for excellent viewing of any late nesting. The area is also rich in other waterbirds and with the continuing dry weather a large variety should be seen.

This trip comes highly recommended for both first time and repeat customers. It will last about 2 hours and will cost \$20, payable in cash on boarding. The point of departure will be from the little landing adjacent to the car park in Bowen Park opposite the new Landmark Apartments. This car park may be accessed off Bowen Drive (going either way – see map 59 of the Yellow Pages). For further information and to book your place please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by email on jack.holland@deh.gov.au). **The boat takes a maximum of 10 passengers, but at the time of going to press as only a few bookings had been made it is likely that there will only be one trip. This may be at 9 am (to be negotiated), offering participants a bit more of a sleep in or a chance to have a preliminary celebration of Mothers' Day.**

### Botanic Gardens Beginners morning Sunday 22 May

This morning walk will be the first for 2005 aimed specifically to help beginners and new members identify birds and to learn about their behaviour and calls. The Botanic Gardens are especially suitable for such an outing, as they allow the opportunity to observe a range of local bush birds in a variety of habitats. Due to the available food supply they are also a relative haven for birds during late autumn/winter. Jenny Bounds will lead this outing, which will consist of a stroll through this lovely part of Canberra for several hours from 9 am, meeting at the bus shelter. Please book your place with Jenny (6288 7802), who will be happy to discuss whether this outing is suitable for you. Please also don't forget to bring your binoculars and field guide. Bring morning tea or join in for a coffee at Hudsons after the event.

### Jervis Bay Long weekend accommodated

**Friday 10 to Monday 13 June**

For this public holiday weekend COG [note this is now a joint outing with the Field Naturalists Association of Canberra (FNAC)] has booked the accommodation belonging to the University of Canberra Field Station, adjacent to HMAS Cresswell and Jervis Bay village. We will be in the North Block, which has double bunk rooms and shared bathrooms and communal kitchen/dining facilities. Participants will need to take their own blankets and linen or sleeping bags as well as food – it is expected some of the evening meals will be shared.

Tony Lawson is organising this trip and will be assisted in leading it by Jenny Bounds. It will provide participants with the opportunity to examine a variety of habitats ranging from woodland, forest, heathland to coastal, as well as the Booderee Botanic Gardens with its variety of walks. Special birds expected are **Eastern Bristlebirds, Tawny-crowned** and **Scarlet Honeyeaters, Southern Emu-wrens, Fairy Penguins** and seabirds such as albatrosses as well as whales.

Participants can arrive either on Friday or Saturday night. Costs will be \$30 per night including the COG admin fee. A \$30 deposit (posted to the Treasurer COG, PO BOX 301 CIVIC SQUARE ACT 2608) will ensure your place, with full payment due by the COG meeting on 11 May. If you are interested please contact Tony Lawson on 6161 9430 or by E-mail on [tlawson@home.com.au](mailto:tlawson@home.com.au).

If necessary car pooling can be arranged. Note that a \$10 per day (or \$30 annual) car or motor cycle entry fee to the Booderee National Park will also apply.

### Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve Superb Lyrebird survey

**Saturday 25 June or Sunday 26 June depending on weather**

Since the January 2003 bushfires Chris Davey and Peter Fullagar have been monitoring the return of the **Superb Lyrebird** to an area of the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

They wish to get an idea of the present distribution within the Reserve and are asking COG members who are familiar with the calls of the Lyrebird to join them for a morning's survey. Although details are yet to be finalised they are calling for expressions of interest to join them at 8:00 am to walk the trails and to record the locations of calling birds. At



**'The Twins'**

Sketch done by Chris de Bruine at Frogmore



**EMU TOURS**

*Nature Tours with the Focus on Birds*

#### **EMU TOURS TO MALAWI IN 2005**

Richard and Roz are going back to Malawi for one more time! The experience of a lifetime—and wonderful birds - in the spring when migrants will be around and birds will be in breeding plumage. We shall include magnificent Nyika Plateau in the north and Liwonde NP. The tour will be for 14 days in mid-October (ask us for the dates). Unbeatable value at **\$2950** twin share ex Lilongwe - with all good accommodation (1 night a bit rustic!).

**Reserve your place now.**

Richard and Roz  
[emutours@austarnet.com.au](mailto:emutours@austarnet.com.au) 0428 38 5677

---

this stage they envisage the survey will take about three hours. This outing will be a repeat of the very successful surveys conducted on 17 July and 21 August last year.

Further details will be announced in the June *Gang-gang* and at COG meetings. If interested please contact Chris Davey on 6254 6324 (H) or Peter Fullagar on 6161 4808 (H).

### **Robin Twitchathon extended morning by bus? Sunday 10 July**

This outing will be aimed at observing all of the seven species of robin that occur in the ACT. In particular we will be concentrating on the identification of the female/immature Red-breasted Robins as a follow up to the May Bird of the Month talk (see page 1). As we will be visiting several spots in the ACT where these birds are present, this is best done by bus. In order to ascertain whether there will be sufficient interest to hire a 12 seater, please contact Jack Holland (6288 7840 AH or by email on jack.holland@deh.gov.au).

### **Wednesday walk Mt Majura Canberra Nature Park Wednesday 18 May**

Meet at 9 am the car park (entrance to Canberra Nature Park) off MacKenzie St (near Grayson St intersection), Hackett for a stroll around the lower slopes. A good opportunity for local woodland species, to see if the **Swift Parrots** are still around and for **Glossy Black-Cockatoos**. There may still be some movement of autumn migrants. Bring morning tea.

## **Longer Field Trips**

### **Lord Howe Island Tour 29 October to 5 November 2005**

A wonderful opportunity to explore this World Heritage island in the company of Lord Howe Island (LHI) naturalist Ian Hutton and sea bird expert Peter Fullagar (both of whom have LHI species named after them). This tour has been devised for COG members to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the first hatching of a captive **Lord Howe Island Woodhen**, a major milestone in this spectacularly successful recovery program. During the 1970s Peter did surveys on all of the birds of Lord Howe, including woodhens on Mount Gower. Besides special events to celebrate this anniversary, Ian and Peter will organise close encounters with land and sea birds, including the endemics. You will also discover and enjoy the flora, marine life, geology, history and special ambience of this lovely island. The tour includes airfares from Sydney, accommodation at Somerset Apartments twin share, all evening meals, walks or boat trips every day with Ian and Peter, evening slide shows, taxes, island transfers; all for a very reasonable \$2002.

There are only 16 places on this tour, which is now nearly fully subscribed and thus viable. **At the time of publication there was one spot left, so be quick.** Additional names will also still being taken for a reserve list. For expressions of interest please contact Trevor Lipscombe (email TrevorLipscombe@bigpond.com or phone 6262 7975).

## **Notices**

**8 Day expedition to find Princess Parrots.** Alan Cowan is hoping to arrange an eight-day expedition for May 24-31 (dates to be confirmed) to try to find Princess Parrots. The itinerary is Broome to Kunawarritji, then north on the Canning Stock Route as far as Well 43, returning to Broome. This is a privately-organised trip and will be led by George Swann, with a maximum group of seven. Interested people please contact Alan urgently on 02 62813038.

**VOLUNTEERS WANTED TREE PLANTING IN COWRA 14/15 May 2005.** The Cowra Woodland Birds Program is starting tree planting in the Shire. Please leave your name and contact details at BASNA Office. Ph: (02)9436 0388 Fax: (02) 9436 0466 Email: rosella63@bigpond.com We are still doing seasonal bird



surveys - June 18/19, September 17/18, December 10/11. New surveyors always welcome!

The 2005 dates for the **Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater surveys** are the weekends of **14-15 May** and **6-7 August**. There are usually several COG members who participate by going out to the western slopes or the south coast. Why not form your own group and go to your favourite spot where trees are flowering or survey local reserves such as Mulligans Flat/Campbell Park/Mount Ainslie as Swift Parrots do pass through Canberra in most years, even if only briefly? Up to 60 birds were present in the Mt Majura Reserve from mid March to mid April 2005, where lerp were an important food source.

**Woodlands for Wildlife - recovery for our birds - Seminar - Saturday 4 June.** As part of World Environment Day celebrations, COG in collaboration with Wildlife Research and Monitoring Unit of Environment ACT and ANU/CRES is hosting this free public seminar in Canberra, on the theme of woodland birds and on ground actions for their recovery, with a regional emphasis. This will be held at CSIRO Discovery Centre, Black Mountain, ACT, from 1.30pm (registration from 1pm), to 4.30. Dr Richard Schodde will chair the seminar. Speakers will discuss on ground research and projects for bird recovery in the ACT and surrounding region, and include Professor David Lindenmayer (CRES/ANU), Dr Geoff Barrett (CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems), and Dr Jack Baker (Birds Australia). Alison Rowell will discuss the results of the latest data analysis from the COG Woodland Bird Survey Project (statistical analysis by Ross Cunningham) and Nicki Taws and Suzi Bond (COG members) will give a presentation from a study about birds breeding in re-vegetation sites. There will be a panel discussion with the speakers. Jenny Bounds is coordinating this event for COG with assistance of a small steering committee. Jenny is seeking volunteers to assist in setting up on the day (from approx 11.30am), car park guides, setting up displays and afternoon tea. Phone Jenny on 6288 7802.



**Swift Parrot** (*Lathamus discolor*)  
Photo courtesy Geoffrey Dabb

**Field assistant volunteers (2) needed** from early **August to 20 December 2005** (dates somewhat flexible; will possibly consider hiring someone from approximately 1 Aug to 10 October or 10 October to 20 December) to assist an American Ph.D. student on a project involving acoustic communication and mate choice in galahs. (Really! Galahs! I know they're everywhere, but they're quite interesting!) Duties may include trapping and handling of large parrots, audio- and video-recording, nest monitoring, radio telemetry, possible tree climbing, resighting and behavioral observations, acoustic analyses, and data entry. Field experience, bird handling experience, experience with acoustics research/software, and radio-tracking experience preferred, but not required. This project is conducted in the northern suburbs of Canberra. This position will offer a great chance to gain experience in acoustic research and handling large parrots. Assistant must be willing to work long hours and 6 days/week, must be able to sit quietly and observe for long periods of time (sometimes without anything happening!) To apply, please send a cover letter, CV, and the names and contact details of four references (three academic, one personal) to Judith Scarl at [jcs83@cornell.edu](mailto:jcs83@cornell.edu) as soon as possible, and no later than 30 May 2005. Feel free to email or call +1 (607) 254 2131 or +1 (607) 351 4115 for further information.

**Conservation Council's World Environment Day Dinner Saturday 4 June** - get a table together to support the Council's environmental advocacy work which has had some good outcomes for birds over the years - the establishment of the Mulligan's Flat NR is just one. Environment Benefit Dinner, 7pm Saturday 4 June, 2005. Four courses of organic and locally produced food, music & key note speaker. Bottled wine available. Majura Hall, Rosevear Place, Dickson. \$45 for tickets or \$40 for I-members & early bird before 20 May Bookings and enquiries 6247 7808. Thanks for your support.

---

## New way to pay membership fees

Membership fees stay at \$35 for 2005-6.

For most members these are **due from 1 July 2005**. Please check your *Gang-gang*/CBN label to check when your membership expires. Please don't pay now if it expires on 30 June 2006 or later.

You can now renew your COG membership by electronic funds transfer directly into COG's bank account.

Transfer money directly from your bank account through electronic banking to St George Bank, BSB 112-908, Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc, account number 050111462

\$35 for renewal (or \$17.50 for full-time students under 18 years old), plus any Canberra Birds Conservation Fund donation

Make sure you state your details (ie initials, surname and COG number) on the transfer. Your COG number is on your GG/CBN label or check with Alastair Smith, the COG membership officer. If we can't identify your payment you might be struck off as a non-renewer!

Tell us separately by email, post or at meetings if any of your details have changed (eg address, phone number, email address, if you now wish to access *Gang-gang* electronically)

You can still pay at meetings or through the post if you prefer that.

For the time being, this new arrangement is only available to renewing members.

Contact Joan Lipscombe, Treasurer, by phone 02 62627975 or email to [joanlipscombe@bigpond.com](mailto:joanlipscombe@bigpond.com) if you have any queries about paying your subscription.

### COG welcomes new, or rejoined, Members

Patricia and Donald Walker and Cecelia Bradley, of Aranda

Paul Doyle, of Campbell

Eleanor Sobey, of Aranda

Peter and Pat MacNicol, of Curtin

Dr Jim Hone, of Lyneham

Charles Buer and Margaret McJannett, of Kambah

John and Barbara Cummings, of Latham

## CanberraBirds email list archive now available

A great step forward has occurred with the establishment of a web-based searchable archive of messages sent to the CanberraBirds email list. The archive is located at <http://bioacoustics.cse.unsw.edu.au/archives/html/canberrabirds/>. A link to the archive is included at the foot of each email posted to the list.

The archive has been developed for COG and list members generally by Dr Andrew Taylor, a Sydney-based computer science academic and birder. COG and list members generally are extremely grateful to Andrew for this wonderful service.

While easy to use, the archive's search engine has quite advanced capabilities for people wishing to undertake complex searches.

Some COGites may choose not to subscribe to the CanberraBirds list because they do not wish to receive a number of emails from it each day. Instead, you can simply visit the list archive from time to time to peruse the topics discussed that you may find of special interest, or to search for a particular subject.

Once again, many thanks to Andrew for establishing this facility for us.

To join the CanberraBirds email announcement and discussion list, send an empty email to [canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au)

*David McDonald*, COG email lists manager, email [coglists-owner@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:coglists-owner@canberrabirds.org.au)

## What to do if you find a dead bird

If the bird is freshly dead place some tissue paper or cotton wool down its throat. Write down the details of where you found it (as precise as possible), date, collector, habitat and how you came across the specimen (found dead, hit window, cat kill etc). Then, if possible, record the colour of its soft parts (iris, beak, legs, toes, claws, wattles or facial skin [if present]). Do this either in pencil or waterproof ink and put the information in the bag with the bird. For smallish birds wrap in tissue paper, biggish ones use newspaper and then place inside a plastic bag and into a freezer asap. If this is not possible or you object to dead birds in your freezer, try and keep the bird as cold as possible and contact either Mark



Clayton 62421725 mark.clayton@csiro.au or Robert Palmer 62421639 robert.palmer@csiro.au to arrange for collection. If a bird is starting to be eaten by maggots etc it can still be of use, either as a skeleton or we may take a wing. At least give the ANWC a chance to inspect the bird.

If the bird is banded, record the band number and the locality etc (as above) on a piece of paper. If the bird is alive and healthy release it where you found it still wearing the band. If it is dead and you can remove the band do so and attach it to your piece of paper. You can send me the details or pass it on to ABBBS@deh.gov.au The people at the banding office will get back to you with details of where the bird was banded etc so be sure to include a contact address. Treat colour banded bird as for a live bird and be sure to record which legs the bands are on. Please record as colour over colour on which leg. Metal bands can look white so try and distinguish it if possible. Wing tags usually have a colour and or combination of letters/numbers – be as precise as possible. There are several other ways of marking birds so if you see something and you are not sure, record what you see and pass it on.

*Mark Clayton*

## GBS Central: the Melba Edition

I am probably being a bit cheeky in writing this at all since GBS Central is now the territory of David Rosalky. However, as I have picked quite a bit of interesting stuff off the chatline I thought I would have a final foray – under this persona at least – into your computers.

The title of this rant is of course a reference to Dame Nellie and not to the suburb on the North Coast of Ginninderra Creek. Given the amount of time since I first mentioned that I was likely to leave I feel that I have done a reasonable job of just extending one departure into the time others could fit several.

To the birds. Some of the records are a bit old since I slacked off last month and didn't write anything.

- **Rainbow Bee-eaters:** 28 in late February over Aranda. This is both a large flock for the GBS (although the biggest was 50 in the early years) and a fairly late observation (a few in mid March);
- The fourth GBS record of a **Diamond Dove:** this one in Curtin;
- Another garden in Curtin had reports of **Satin Bowerbirds** for two weeks and noted **Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** in week 12.
- From Watson in mid March (week 11) came the 14<sup>th</sup> GBS record of a Little Friarbird, perched in an almond tree that seemed to become bird-paradise for the rest of that week.
- A site (possibly now the site) in Deakin reported, in early March 5 members of the Psittaciformes and a **Satin Bowerbird** (plus several) of the more common species) at one time.

In my final couple of months in the piedmont of Gossan Hill we have been graced by a **Tawny Frogmouth**, a **Grey Butcherbird** and a **Pallid Cuckoo** (RIP). We also heard, on two consecutive nights the first **Southern Boobook** since we returned from Tanzania. Over this last year we have recorded 56 species, which isn't too bad. Probably better than I will manage from the concrete canyons!

Thanks to all who have contributed to the GBS over the last 18 months and thanks again to David for taking it on. It has been a hoot!

*Martin Butterfield*

## HIDEAWAY FOR TWO!

### Guerilla Bay / Burrewarra Point

Lovely, clean and quiet self contained 1 bedroom flat amid trees, own courtyard and garden, adjacent Burrewarra Point cliff top reserve. Close unspoiled walks, beaches. Over 120 bird species seen in the local area, half from the property and lots of other interesting fauna and flora. Reasonable rates. Contact Joan and Trevor Lipscombe 02 6262 7975.

.....

## PASSIVE SOLAR HOUSE

### South Rosedale

*Arupingi* is a passive solar house situated in a peaceful bushland setting in South Rosedale. Birdwatching is possible from the comfort of a chair on the front or back deck. For the more energetic, Guerrilla Bay and Burrewarra Point are within walking distance. The wetlands at Barling's Beach are only a few kilometres away. Rich birding is available in almost any direction, the Eurobodalla Botanical Gardens are a favourite spot while the front beach at Rosedale is usually patrolled by the resident White-bellied Sea-Eagle.

For further details contact Greg or Sallie Ramsay, 31 MacRobertson St, MAWSON, ACT 2607, phone 6286 1564 or e-mail at greg.ramsay@actewagl.net.au

.....

## MUDBRICK COTTAGE

### Mallacoota

Our mudbrick cottage is available for rental for all those nature lovers out there!! It is set amongst the trees in Mallacoota, Victoria (approximately 4 hours drive from Canberra). It is only 10 minutes walk to the beach, 5 minutes walk to the golf course and about 15 minutes walk to town. It sleeps 4-6 upstairs and there is a sofa bed downstairs. It is fully self-contained with a kitchen and laundry. Please contact Barbara de Bruine (02 – 62583531) for further information.

# COG SALES COG SALES

- **'The Long Paddock** - a Directory of Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves in NSW' by Rural Lands Protection Board - \$31.00
- **The Birds of Western NSW: A Preliminary Atlas** - NSW Bird Atlassers - **reduced** to \$5.00
- **Finding Birds in Darwin, Kakadu and Top End** by Niven McCrie and James Watson. \$24.00.
- **Wet and Wild** - A Field Guide to the Freshwater Animals of the Southern Tablelands and High Country" by M Lintermans and W Osborne, \$28.00 (RRP \$34.95).
- **Wildlife on Farms** - by David Lindenmayer RRP \$29.95, **special price** for COG members - \$25.00.
- **Where to Find Birds in NE Queensland** - Joe Wieneke - \$16.00.
- **Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT** - Ross Bennett - \$13.00.
- **Native Trees of the ACT** - \$6.50.
- **Birds of Rottnest Island** – by Denis Saunders & Parry de Rebeira -\$15.00
- **Birds of Rottnest Island** – a check list - \$1.00
- **Grassland Flora** – a Field Guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW and ACT) – by David Eddy et al. - \$13.00
- **Our Patch** – Field Guide to the Flora of the ACT Region - \$13.00
- **The Nestbox Book** – Gould League - \$12.50
- **Birds of Queensland's Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef** by Lloyd Nielsen - \$25.00
- **Field Guide to the Birds of the ACT** – by Taylor and Day \$14.00
- Simpson and Days' **Birds of Australia CDROM** Version 5.0 **special price** - \$45.00
- COG Atlas - \$12.00
- COG Car Stickers - \$2.00
- COG Birds of Canberra Gardens Poster - \$4.00
- COG Garden Bird Survey Chart (New Version) - \$1.00
- COG Badges – two colour versions - \$5.00
- COG Birds of the ACT – Two Centuries of Change – by Steve Wilson - \$25.00
- COG Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the ACT - \$1.00
- COG Bird Songs of Canberra – Cassette - \$10.00.

## From the Committee

Apart from more routine business, your committee considered the following issues at its April meeting:

- storage of old records;
- subscription costs for 2005-06 (and yes, we agreed to maintain the \$35 rate, you'll be pleased to hear!)
- a new Woodland Survey site, in Belconnen;
- Conservation matters below;
- progressing web-based data input
- website usage, costs and protocols
- the Fullagar/Slater CD production and marketing; and
- display equipment.

For details, please consult any committee member.

*Barbara Allan, secretary*

## Conservation Matters

COG was invited to participate in a community workshop to develop a management plan for the Googong Foreshores - Jenny Bounds attended this on 20 April.

Proposed urban development areas in the Molonglo Valley were announced by the Government in mid April and will be subject to further studies. The Molonglo Valley is the most important area for birds of prey in the ACT and the planning authorities have been briefed on this. COGs position is that the areas proposed south and west of Holt which contain grassy woodlands and secondary grasslands (including a small population of Brown Treecreepers) should not be developed; the southern area which largely mirrors the burned out pine forests would be more acceptable if urban development must occur in the Valley; the sensitive Molonglo River corridor also needs to be properly protected. COG will be keeping a close watch on developments.

COG provided bird data and other information to ACTEW/AGL relating to riverine and woodland areas in the

*(Continued on page 12)*

COG T-shirts, Polo shirts, all above and other books on local flora and fauna available at the monthly meeting sales desk or by contacting Carol Macleay (for post and packing costs) on 02 6286 2624.

---

## Avian Whimsy #30

### Airing Old Grebances

Quick quiz question, before you read on. Which is the most 'Australian' grebe? My answer shortly...

I don't think we value grebes enough. I suspect that most of us at a wetland deal with the grebes on the first pass – along with coots and moorhens, Black Duck and Grey Teals – before we start searching for the interesting stuff... Perhaps it's understandable – they're not the most dramatic of Australian birds, and not even very dramatic by overseas grebe standards. That's no excuse though. They are also common and widespread in Australia, and for the most part not particularly distinctly 'Australian'. But there's a reason for that too – grebes are *old!!* They arose so long ago that they are spread throughout the world. Their ancestors knew the world when it was an entirely different shape from now.

*Neogaeornis* worked the waters of Chile some 80 million years ago. Fifteen million years later its distant descendants witnessed the spectacularly cataclysmic explosion of a vast meteorite strike near the Gulf of Mexico. They watched and survived as 85% of all animal species on earth perished in the subsequent great freeze under the choking dust cloud that followed. They found themselves in a world suddenly bereft of dinosaurs and toothed birds. If there were marine grebes they now swam in a sea no longer ruled by the great ammonite dynasty. The Chilean grebes also became isolated from their Australian relations as Gondwana finally broke apart. Nearly all Australian bird groups are raw newcomers alongside the venerable grebes.

The three Australian grebe species represent three stages in Australian grebedom. The handsome Great Crested is found across Europe and Asian mid-latitudes, as well as scattered through Africa. Perhaps it arrived relatively recently in Australia. Its genus though, *Podiceps*, has been around for some 30 million years. The Australasian Grebe is limited to Australia and nearby islands – notably Java, Timor, New Guinea, New Caledonia and New Zealand. Its genus though is found on every unfrozen continent, so we assume that its ancestor – very close to the Old World-wide Little Grebe – arrived here in the middle past. We usually lump the two Australian 'little grebes', but this is quite unfair. The Hoary-headed is an old Australian belonging to a quite different genus of just two species, one Australian and one a kiwi grebe. This genus, *Poliiocephalus*, apparently arose long ago in one of these places and subsequently crossed the Tasman Sea to found another species. In fact in recent times a breeding population of Hoary-headed has established itself in the South Island, so the pattern may be about to repeat itself. (How did you go with the initial quiz question?)

But like any bird, they are of course of intrinsic interest too. Diving specialists, they have largely sacrificed other means of locomotion to perfect this – in fact two South American species have entirely eschewed flight, and another is in the process of doing so. When did you last see a grebe flying across land? Yet nearly every farm dam seems to have a resident pair and presumably the answer is that they're such hopeless flyers that they must do it at night for safety. To help them dive better, they have reversed the universal avian trend to lighter bones and have got heavier again. Some in fact are known to swallow pebbles as ballast! In addition their legs are far back on the body to act as propellers, but this means they are virtually unable to walk.

A grebe has over 20,000 densely packed feathers for waterproofing; sadly this made them a target for the egregious feather trade in the recent past. It seems that New Zealand Great Crested Grebe populations have never recovered from this.

Their beautiful floating nests act as compost heaps to help incubation. We have all delighted to watch the parents hastily arrange weed across the eggs before slipping away at our approach. And in the whole world of anthropomorphism there are few things cuter than a couple of bumblebee-striped chicks peeking out from under a parent's wing as it swims – and even dives! Grebes are essential carnivores. It seems that, like teenagers, any salad they do take is purely accidental. Some fish-eating species eat large quantities of their own feathers. Perhaps this is to line the stomach against fish bones, though it also seems to reduce the incidence of intestinal parasites by lining the stomach wall.

And I can't end without making awed mention of the glorious and spectacularly choreographed courtship displays, especially of the Great Cresteds. In superb harmony they swim away from each other and back, rise and rock breast to breast, rush side by side, call and dive together. It all makes Synchronised Swimming look as silly as – well, as silly as it is...

So, more respect please for the wonderful grebes, true patriarchs and matriarchs of the Australian bird world.

Ian Fraser [ianf@pcug.org.au](mailto:ianf@pcug.org.au)





## WONGA

Bawley Point

South Coast of N.S.W.

Two well equipped timber cottages in 50 acres. Damp and dry warm temperate forest, kunzea and rock provide for a diversity of birds and other animals. A short walk down the driveway leads to sand dunes and beaches, sea birds and Hooded Plovers. Close to National Parks, lakes and historic sites.  
patricia.walker@bigpond.com  
phone 02 6251 3136  
www.visitnsw.com.au (follow accommodation and Wonga)

Naas Valley where a dam has been proposed. This is one of the options for future water supply which is under consideration by Government, but is the highest cost and most environmentally destructive option.

COG has been advised of plans to continue a program of removal of willows at Jerrabomberra wetlands and will be following this up, to ensure the authorities are aware of the areas which need to be sensitively managed, eg the breeding habitats for darters along the Molonglo etc.

## Next newsletter

**JUNE deadline**  
**Wednesday 25 May 2005**

Please send updates, articles, advertisements etcetera to  
**Editors Gang-gang**  
**gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au**  
or send c/- The Secretary  
**COG, PO Box 301**  
**Civic Square, ACT 2608**

Articles should be less than 500 words (300 for reports of 1-day field trips; except by prior arrangement with the editor. Print photographs with or without articles are encouraged and welcomed.

## COG info

### *President*

**Jack Holland, ph 6288 7840 (h),**  
email [jack.holland@deh.gov.au](mailto:jack.holland@deh.gov.au)

### *Vice President*

**Nicki Taws, ph 6251 0303**

### *Treasurer*

**Joan Lipscombe ph 6262 7975**

### *Secretary*

**Barbara Allan ph 6254 6520**

### *Membership inquiries*

**Contact Alastair Smith 61618608(h)**  
or [alastair@homemail.com.au](mailto:alastair@homemail.com.au) for  
changes of address or other details

### *Address for correspondence*

**The Secretary**  
**COG, PO Box 301**  
**Civic Square, ACT 2608**

### *Gang-gang editor*

**Tanya Rough 6161 0151 (h)**  
and **Sue Lashko**

### *Newsletter distribution*

**Lia Battisson and helpers**

### *Canberra Birds Conservation Fund*

**Donations to this fund are tax deductible. Funds are used to support projects that protect and enhance native birds and the environments that sustain them.**

### *COG website*

**[www.canberrabirds.org.au](http://www.canberrabirds.org.au)**

### *COG membership*

**2004-2005 membership: Individuals, families and institutions: \$35. school students (under 18): \$17.50.**

### *Office (6247 4996)*

**COG maintains an office in room G5, Griffin Centre, Bunda Street, civic.**

**[cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:cogoffice@canberrabirds.org.au)**

**Office volunteers are not in attendance for regular opening hours. Members access by prior arrangement.**

### *COG E-mail Discussion List*

**COG has an email announcement and discussion list for members and friends of COG: 'Canberra Birds'.**

**Join the list by sending an empty email message to [canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:canberrabirds-subscribe@canberrabirds.org.au).**

### *Editor Canberra Bird Notes*

**[CBN@canberrabirds.org.au](mailto:CBN@canberrabirds.org.au)**



## Gang-gang

If undeliverable, please return to  
Canberra Ornithologists Group, Inc.  
PO Box 301, Civic Square ACT 2608

**SURFACE  
MAIL**

**POSTAGE  
PAID  
AUSTRALIA**